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**WORLD OF PHYSICS**

- [Astrophysics](#)
- [Electromagnetism](#)
- [Experimental Physics](#)
- [Fluid Mechanics](#)
- [History and Terminology](#)
- [Mechanics](#)
- [Modern Physics](#)
- [Optics](#)
- [States of Matter](#)
- [Thermodynamics](#)
- [Units & Dimensional Analysis](#)
- [Wave Motion](#)

**ALPHABETICAL INDEX**

- [ABOUT THIS SITE](#)
- [FAQS](#)
- [WHAT'S NEW](#)
- [RANDOM ENTRY](#)
- [BE A CONTRIBUTOR](#)
- [SIGN THE GUESTBOOK](#)
- [EMAIL COMMENTS](#)

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## Shear Stress

Shear stress  $\sigma$  is a quantity with units of pressure that is related to the strain rate experienced by a fluid by

$$\sigma \equiv \eta [\text{strain rate}], \quad (1)$$

where  $\eta$  is the dynamic viscosity. Writing out the strain rate then gives

$$\sigma = \eta \dot{\epsilon} = \eta \frac{1}{l} \frac{dl}{dt}. \quad (2)$$

The shear stress thus expresses the tendency of a fluid to be "pulled apart" (sheared) by a differential force, with  $\eta$  acting as a resistance to the shear.

There is a shear stress on a fluid having a velocity  $u$  on the upper layer but which is constrained to be zero at a lower boundary at a distance  $d$  below the upper surface. For a Newtonian fluid,

$$\frac{du}{dy} = \frac{1}{l} \frac{dl}{dt} = \frac{u}{l}. \quad (3)$$

But the gradient from bottom to top is

$$\frac{du}{dy} = \frac{u}{d}, \quad (4)$$

so

$$l = d \quad (5)$$

and the shear stress is simply given in this case by

$$\sigma = \eta \frac{du}{dy} = \eta \frac{1}{l} \frac{dl}{dt} = \eta \frac{v}{l} = \eta \frac{v}{d}. \quad (6)$$

**SEE ALSO:** [Dynamic Viscosity](#), [Shear](#), [Strain Rate](#), [Stress](#)

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